

## FactCheck on Avian Flu

### **The World Health Organization (WHO) has urged nations to prepare for an avian flu pandemic:**

“In view of the immediacy of the threat, WHO recommends that all countries undertake urgent action to prepare for a pandemic...The risk of a pandemic is great. Since late 2003, the world has moved closer to a pandemic than at any time since 1968, when the last of the previous century’s three pandemics occurred. All prerequisites for the start of a pandemic have now been met save one: the establishment of efficient human-to-human transmission. During 2005, ominous changes have been observed in the epidemiology of the disease in animals. Human cases are continuing to occur, and the virus has expanded its geographical range to include new countries, thus increasing the size of the population at risk. Each new human case gives the virus an opportunity to evolve towards a fully transmissible human pandemic strain.”<sup>1</sup>

[http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/influenza/WHO\\_CDS\\_CSR\\_GIP\\_05\\_8-EN.pdf](http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/influenza/WHO_CDS_CSR_GIP_05_8-EN.pdf)

### **The European Union (EU) is focused on preparedness:**

“European authorities are taking no chances. EU officials banned imports of live birds from Romania and Turkey, vowed to fast-track a bird-flu vaccine and considered protective measures against infection from wild birds, such as requiring farms to house poultry indoors.”

<http://msnbc.msn.com/id/9711926/site/newsweek/>

The European commission asked member nations to intensify their efforts in August 2005, “The European Commission today convened in Brussels a meeting of EU veterinary experts from all Member States to discuss the avian influenza situation in Asia and Russia (Siberia) and which steps should be taken in order to increase vigilance against the disease spreading to the EU. The Commission has asked the Member States to step up surveillance and will make financing available in order to facilitate this effort. A number of actions were agreed at the meeting, including a review of contingency plans and increased vigilance to ensure that existing measures such as import bans are fully enforced.”

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/1068&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

### **The EU has taken steps to halt the spread of avian flu among birds:**

“The EU has already intensified its measures against the disease by quarantining poultry populations and setting up early detection systems along the paths of migratory birds, which are carrying the disease from Asia. It also has called on Europeans to avoid recreational activities like hunting that risk bringing humans into contact with contaminated birds.”

<http://www.ihf.com/articles/2005/10/18/news/flu.php>

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization. 2005. “responding to the Avian Influenza Pandemic Threat: Recommended Strategic Actions.” Page 1 and 3.

**The EU Plans to coordinate efforts in response to avian flu:**

“European foreign ministers on Tuesday declared the bird flu outbreak a "global threat" and warned that the European Union was not sufficiently prepared for a pandemic if the virus changed in a way that would allow it to spread readily among humans.”

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/10/18/news/flu.php>

“[British Foreign Secretary Jack] Straw added that EU health ministers meeting near London on Thursday and Friday would discuss coordinating their efforts to ensure that the disease did not spread across the Continent. He said the EU would shortly stage a simulated pandemic response to test the bloc's preparedness.”

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/10/18/news/flu.php>

**European nations are working to stop the spread of avian flu:**

“Romania acted swiftly to the crisis, culling 18,000 birds in six days. That left 27,000 to go, though, and that was just one village.”

<http://msnbc.msn.com/id/9711926/site/newsweek/page/2/>

**EU nations have taken definitive actions to prepare for an outbreak of avian flu:**

“Across Europe on Tuesday, countries stepped up their efforts to defend against the virus. In France, Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin said 50 million masks to protect against bird flu were being delivered to French hospitals. The Spanish government said it planned to order 6 million to 11 million doses of anti-viral medicines to prepare for the possibility of a flu epidemic. Meanwhile, British customs agents intensified searches for birds, feathers and eggs on flights from Turkey and Romania in hopes of keeping the disease out of the country.”

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/10/18/news/flu.php>

“In Germany, authorities announced nationwide poultry quarantine measures would come into force from Saturday in response to the Russian outbreak. Germany said it would confine all live poultry to their pens to prevent them from coming into contact with migrating birds, believed by some to be carrying the virus from Asia.”

[http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/common/story\\_page/0,5744,16983552%255E23289,00.html](http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5744,16983552%255E23289,00.html)

**Great Britain is focused on preparedness:**

“Britain's Department of Health is to offer vaccine manufacturers multi-million-pound "sleeping contracts" -- unprecedented cash advances to help them to prepare for the arrival of a bird flu pandemic -- to ensure there is enough vaccine for up to 60 million people.”

[http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/common/story\\_page/0,5744,16983552%255E23289,00.html](http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5744,16983552%255E23289,00.html)

“Britain plans to buy enough vaccine to protect the entire population as soon as any bird flu pandemic emerges, the government said on Wednesday. The Department of Health said the country would need to have around 120 million doses available as soon as possible after an outbreak, enough for two shots per person. The vaccine cannot be made

until the precise strain of pandemic flu is established but the government is inviting manufacturers to tender for contracts in advance of this.”

<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L19640672.htm>

“Europe's top health officials stepped up the battle to keep bird flu at bay Thursday, holding talks to map out a strategy against the deadly disease...[European Union Health Commissioner Markos] Kyprianou said all the EU's 25 members had submitted plans for how they would handle a possible flu pandemic, although some were still in draft form. Almost all the countries have either acquired or ordered drug stockpiles sufficient to treat those who would fall ill in a major outbreak, he said at a news conference after the ministers' meeting...All of the EU nations sent representatives to the gathering at a hotel northwest of London and delegates from Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Croatia also attended. Experts from the World Health Organization and the European Center for Disease Control briefed the officials.”

<http://www.freewmexican.com/news/33988.html>

“The UK's defences to a flu pandemic will be tested in a Europe-wide exercise, the health secretary says. Patricia Hewitt said next month's exercise aimed to "strengthen our defences" against a flu pandemic which would be a "very nasty beast indeed".”

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/4363062.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4363062.stm)

### **African nations take precautions to protect against avian flu:**

“Kenya joins other African countries in taking measures to protect themselves from bird flu infection. Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Sudan, Senegal and Ghana have recently banned imports of poultry from parts of Asia affected by the virus.”

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2005-10-21-voa29.cfm>

### **Kenya focuses on preparedness:**

“Dr. Nyikal says his country is preparing for the worst-case scenario. "The Ministry of Health is working closely with the World Health Organization in exploring measures to deal with possible avian flu outbreak," said Dr. Nyikal. "The Ministry of Health is monitoring very closely every development on avian flu around the world, and is constantly reviewing the country's avian flu epidemic preparedness and response plans." Following an alert notice issued by the World Health Organization, WHO, last year, several government ministries, universities, a research institute and the World Health Organization formed a working group in Kenya to develop and coordinate a response strategy. Some measures that have been taken include: encouraging all health facilities to watch out for suspected bird flu cases; upgrading laboratories to confirm suspected cases of the virus; making arrangements with the World Health Organization to get the anti-viral drug Tamiflu in case the virus should spread to humans; and properly destroying exposed, infected, and dead chickens.”

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2005-10-21-voa29.cfm>

